



Shaolin Kungfu Dragon & Tiger: Step-by-Step Instructions

The Dragon and Tiger forms in Shaolin Kungfu are classic animal styles, each with distinct characteristics and techniques. Below is a step-by-step breakdown to help you practice the basics of both styles, focusing on stance, movement, and signature techniques.

Tiger Style: Step-by-Step Basics

1. Starting Position

- Stand naturally straight, feet shoulder-width apart.
- Take a deep breath in and out to center yourself^[1].

2. Tiger Claw Formation

- Raise your hands in front of you, fingers spread and slightly bent to form "tiger claws."
- Imagine the power and ferocity of a tiger as you move^[1] ^[2].

3. Stepping and Stance

- Step forward with your left foot into a deep stance (similar to a horse stance, but with more weight forward: 60% on the front leg, 40% on the back)^[1].
- Keep your back straight and shoulders relaxed.

4. Basic Tiger Strike

- With your tiger claws, strike downward forcefully as if grabbing or tearing^[1] ^[2].
- Focus on channeling power from your waist and shoulders through your arms.

5. Tiger Punch Combination

- From the stance, throw three vertical punches in quick succession, retracting each hand quickly to guard your face^[2].
- Step back slightly with each punch to maintain balance and defensive positioning.

6. Tiger Blocking and Counter

- Cross both hands downward at a 45-degree angle to block, then open and press out at shoulder height^[2].
- Use your body weight and twist your waist to add power to the block.

7. Tiger Circular Strike

- Circle your arm from one side to the other, leading with your tiger claw, and finish with a low stance and a strong downward strike^[2].
- This move can be used to deflect an attack and counter simultaneously.

Dragon Style: Step-by-Step Basics

1. Dragon Stance and Flow

- Begin in a relaxed stance, focusing on fluid, circular movements.
- The dragon style emphasizes softness, flexibility, and guiding force rather than meeting it head-on^[3].

2. Dragon Block (Brush Block)

- Use an inward middle block, but instead of a hard stop, guide the opponent's force aside with a soft, flowing motion^[3].
- Move your body towards the opponent as your hand circles back, blending with their attack.

3. Transition from Tiger to Dragon

- Start with a hard tiger block, then soften your arm and body to transition into a dragon-style brush block^[3].
- This teaches you to move from forceful resistance to adaptive redirection.

4. Dragon Counter Techniques

- After deflecting, spiral your opponent's arm up and around, using your body to control their balance^[3].
- Follow with a vertical wrist pin or a lock, using soft but controlled pressure.

5. Dragon Punch and Footwork

- Use circular, spiraling punches that follow your body's rotation.
- Step with the inside of your foot (inner gate) to gain a positional advantage^[4] ^[3].

Dragon & Tiger Combination Practice

- Practice sequences where you start with a Tiger-style block or strike, then transition into Dragon-style redirection and counter.
- For example, block with a tiger claw, then immediately flow into a dragon brush block and counter with a spiral lock or punch^[4] ^[3].

In Shaolin Kung Fu the Dragon must grow out of the Tiger. For this to happen the blocks must proceed from hard to soft... Guide, instead of break. ^[3]

Tips for Practice

- Always warm up and stretch before practicing animal forms.
- Focus on the intent and spirit of each animal: Tiger is powerful and direct, Dragon is fluid and adaptive.
- Practice slowly at first, emphasizing correct form and transitions, then gradually increase speed and power^[1] ^[2].
- Use a mirror or record yourself to check your posture and technique.

For more detailed visual instructions, refer to video tutorials on Tiger and Dragon forms^[1] ^[2] ^[5]. Consistent practice will help you embody the unique qualities of both the Tiger and the Dragon in your Shaolin Kungfu.

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Bodybuilding & Strength + Conditioning for Shaolin Kungfu

Building a Shaolin Kungfu physique requires a balanced approach: strength, endurance, flexibility, and especially balance. Here's a practical guideline for sets, repetitions, duration, and balance training, based on Shaolin principles and modern strength conditioning.

General Structure

- **Warm-up:** Always begin with 10–30 minutes of running or dynamic movement to prepare the body^[6] ^[7].
- **Main Workout:** Combine traditional Shaolin drills with modern strength and conditioning.

Strength & Conditioning Routine

Exercise Type	Sets	Repetitions	Duration/Notes
Push-ups (various types)	5	10–20	Focus on explosive and slow reps
Squats (bodyweight or jump)	5	20	Deep stances for leg strength
Traditional punches	5	20–30	Full extension, focus on speed
Kicks (front, side, cross)	5	10–20	Each leg, slow and controlled
Plank/Static holds	3	30–60 sec	Core and static strength
Balance drills (see below)	3–5	30–60 sec	Each leg or position

- **Rest:** 30–60 seconds between sets.
- **Total Duration:** 45–60 minutes per session, 3–5 times per week^[6] ^[7].

Balance Training

- **Stance Holds:** Horse stance, crane stance, and single-leg stances for 30–60 seconds per set, 3–5 sets. Focus on posture and breathing^[8] ^[7].
- **Dynamic Balance:** Practice slow kicks and transitions between stances (e.g., moving from horse stance to bow stance to crane stance).
- **Static Strength:** Shaolin also uses static strength holds—tense and flex muscles while holding low stances for as long as possible to build endurance and balance^[9].

Sample Shaolin Conditioning Circuit

1. 1-minute warm-up (jumping jacks or running in place)
2. 20 push-ups

3. 20 deep squats
4. 30 traditional punches
5. 10 straight kicks per leg
6. 30 seconds horse stance hold
7. 10 cross kicks per leg
8. 30 seconds crane stance hold (each leg)
9. Repeat circuit 3–5 times^{[6] [7]}.

Training Principles

- **Consistency:** Daily practice is encouraged for Shaolin conditioning, but listen to your body and rest as needed^{[6] [8]}.
- **Progression:** Start with lower reps/sets and increase as your strength and endurance improve.
- **Form Over Weight:** Focus on perfect technique and full range of motion rather than heavy weights^{[6] [7]}.

Integration with Kungfu Practice

- Combine strength and conditioning with forms, sparring, and flexibility work for a holistic Shaolin regimen^{[6] [8]}.
- Include Qigong and stretching for recovery and internal strength^[8].

This approach will develop the power, endurance, and balance essential for Shaolin Kungfu, while also building a strong, athletic physique^{[6] [7] [9]}.

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Bodybuilding & Aerobics for Shaolin Kungfu

Combining bodybuilding and aerobic training is essential for developing the strength, endurance, and agility needed for Shaolin Kungfu. Here's how to structure your training, including sets, repetitions, duration, and balance work, based on Shaolin principles and modern fitness methods.

1. Aerobic Conditioning

- **Running:** Start each session with 10–30 minutes of running to warm up and build cardiovascular endurance, as is traditional in Shaolin training^[10].
- **Jump Rope:** Incorporate 5–10 minutes of skipping to further boost aerobic capacity and coordination^[11].
- **Circuit Training:** Perform exercises back-to-back (e.g., squats, push-ups, kicks) with minimal rest to keep your heart rate elevated and improve stamina^{[10] [12]}.

2. Bodybuilding & Strength Exercises

Exercise	Sets	Repetitions	Notes
Push-ups	5	10–20	Explosive and slow variations [10] [12]
Squats	5	20	Deep stance, focus on leg strength [10] [12]
Traditional Punches	5	20–30	Speed and full extension [10]
Kicks	5	10–20	Each leg, controlled movement [10] [12]
Plank Holds	3	30–60 sec	Core strength and stability [13]
Horse Stance Hold	3–5	30–60 sec	Build leg endurance and rooting [12]

- **Rest:** 30–60 seconds between sets.
- **Total Duration:** 45–60 minutes per session, 3–5 times per week [\[10\]](#).

3. Balance Training

- **Static Holds:** Practice horse stance, crane stance, and single-leg stances for 30–60 seconds per set, 3–5 sets [\[13\]](#) [\[12\]](#).
- **Dynamic Balance:** Perform slow, controlled kicks and transitions between stances to improve balance and proprioception [\[12\]](#).
- **Table Toes Exercise:** Stand on tiptoes in horse stance to train ankles and calves, holding for 20–60 seconds per set [\[12\]](#).

4. Flexibility and Recovery

- Include dynamic stretching before and static stretching after training to maintain flexibility and prevent injury [\[14\]](#) [\[15\]](#).
- Use massage or self-myofascial release after workouts to reduce muscle stiffness [\[12\]](#).

Sample Shaolin Kungfu Bodybuilding & Aerobic Routine

1. **Warm-up:** 10–20 minutes running or jump rope

2. **Circuit (repeat 3–5 times):**

- 10–20 push-ups
- 20 squats
- 20–30 traditional punches
- 10–20 kicks per leg
- 30 seconds horse stance hold
- 30 seconds crane stance hold (each leg)

3. **Cooldown:** Stretching and massage

Key Principles

- **Consistency:** Train at least 3–5 times per week for best results [\[10\]](#).
- **Progression:** Gradually increase sets, reps, or duration as you get stronger.

- **Form:** Prioritize correct technique over heavy weights or high reps.
- **Integration:** Combine strength, aerobic, and balance training for a holistic Shaolin Kungfu regimen.

This approach will help you develop the strength, endurance, and balance necessary for effective Shaolin Kungfu practice [\[10\]](#) [\[13\]](#) [\[12\]](#).

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Weight Training and Cardio Machine Training for Shaolin Kungfu

Combining weight training and cardio machine work with Shaolin Kungfu enhances strength, power, endurance, and overall athleticism. Here's how to structure your training for optimal results:

Weight Training Guidelines

- **Focus:** Compound lifts (squats, deadlifts, bench press, pull-ups, rows) develop total-body strength and explosive power, which complement Shaolin techniques.
- **Sets & Reps:**
 - Strength: 3–5 sets of 4–8 reps (heavy, controlled)
 - Hypertrophy (muscle building): 3–4 sets of 8–12 reps (moderate weight)
 - Endurance: 2–3 sets of 15–20 reps (lighter weight, higher reps)
- **Frequency:** 2–3 times per week, integrated with your martial arts practice.
- **Explosive/Functional Work:** Add kettlebell swings, medicine ball slams, and plyometric push-ups to mimic Shaolin explosive movement [\[16\]](#) [\[17\]](#).

Sample Weight Training Routine:

- Barbell Squats: 4 sets x 8 reps
- Pull-Ups: 4 sets x max reps
- Dumbbell Bench Press: 3 sets x 10 reps
- Barbell Rows: 3 sets x 10 reps
- Kettlebell Swings: 3 sets x 15 reps
- Plank Holds: 3 sets x 1 minute

Cardio Machine Training

- **Purpose:** Improve cardiovascular endurance, stamina, and recovery—key for long kungfu sessions.
- **Machines:** Treadmill, rowing machine, stationary bike, elliptical.
- **Structure:**
 - **Steady-State Cardio:** 20–40 minutes at moderate intensity, 2–3 times per week.

- **Interval Training (HIIT):** 10–20 minutes alternating 1–2 minutes high intensity with 1–2 minutes low intensity, 1–2 times per week.
- **Warm-Up:** Always start with 5–10 minutes of easy movement to prepare the body^[18].

Integration with Shaolin Kungfu

- **Balance:** Combine weight and cardio days with traditional Shaolin bodyweight and stance training (e.g., horse stance, static holds) for functional strength and rooting^[18] ^[19].
- **Example Weekly Split:**
 - Day 1: Weight training + Shaolin forms
 - Day 2: Cardio machine + stance/balance work
 - Day 3: Kungfu technique & flexibility
 - Day 4: Weight training + Shaolin drills
 - Day 5: Cardio machine + stance/balance work

Key Tips

- Prioritize form and control in all lifts to avoid injury and ensure transfer to martial arts.
- Use cardio sessions to build stamina for long kungfu practice—intervals mimic the bursts of effort in sparring and forms.
- Always include Shaolin-specific drills (stance work, kicks, punches) for skill transfer^[18] ^[19] ^[17].

This approach will help you build the strength, power, and endurance needed for effective Shaolin Kungfu, while maintaining the agility and balance required by traditional practice.

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1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZsEZ1KZ_HQ
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17. <https://www.strongfirst.com/community/threads/resources-for-traditional-martial-arts-strength-training.26278/>
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19. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THVaLQwlsXs>